Taking a Snapshot of Early Childhood Response to Intervention Across the United States: 2009 and 2010

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Abstract

The Response to Intervention (RTI) approach to assessment and service delivery is becoming common in elementary schools nationally and its prevalence is increasing nationwide. Less common however, is an RTI approach to early childhood education and early intervention. This study examines the extent that states are beginning to implement practices related to RTI in early childhood programs. This poster reports findings from national surveys in 2009 and 2010 regarding states' progress implementing preschool RTI.

Introduction

The RTI approach in elementary schools nationally is increasing common (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009). They reported that 15 states have adopted an RTI model with 9 implementing on a large scale, 6 on a small scale, and twenty-two in development phases. In 2009, we reported that the majority of states were only discussing preschool RTI or providing some degree of professional development. **The purpose of this investigation is to add to this knowledge by examining the implementation status of RTI in Early Childhood settings across US states and territories as reported in 2010.**

Research Questions

1.To what extent is the RTI approach being implemented nationally as reported by:
   A. State 619 (Early Childhood Special Education) and Pre-K Directors?
   B. State Head Start Directors?
2. In what types of early childhood programs is RTI currently being implemented?
3, What are the reported challenges to implementing RTI in early childhood settings?

Methods

Sample

The 2009 population of knowledgeable state early childhood special education leaders who were surveyed included IDEA-Part B [619] directors, and state PreK directors. All were surveyed in order to generalize findings to the USA. In all, 57 responded.

In 2010, this same population of knowledgeable state leaders was surveyed. Additionally, State Head Start Collaboration Office Directors also were surveyed. A listing of these leaders in each state and territory and their contact information was obtained from the NECTAC website (online at htttp://www.nectac.org/contact/619coord.asp). In all 73 responded.

Measurement and Procedures

An 8-item survey (2009) and two 14-item surveys (2010) were developed based on brief reviews of the literature, expert feedback, discussions among colleagues, and analysis of 2009 survey responses to determine relevant questions. The first 2010 survey was sent to the IDEA-Part B [619] directors, and state PreK directors; the second was tailored for the Head Start leaders, and it was sent to Head Start State Collaboration Office Directors. However, Items from both surveys collected the same information.

Methods (Continued)

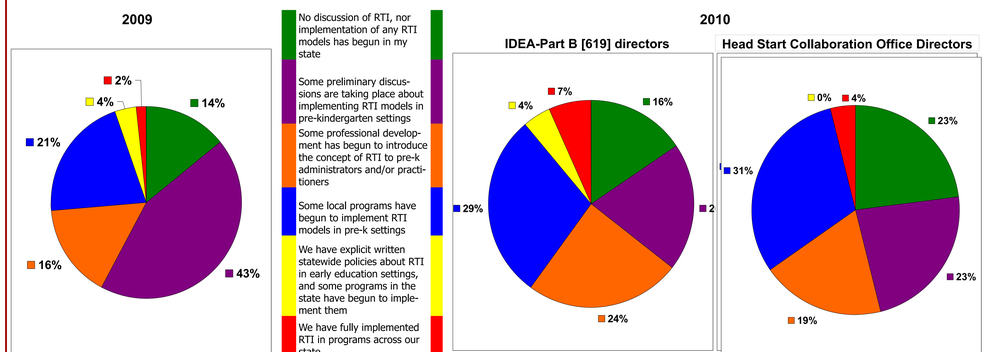
Measurement and Procedures

Following several demographic information items (i.e., name, state, role/position), the first item on all surveys was a multiple choice question where choices were ordered ranging from "No Implementation" to "Full Implementation in my state." If a respondent indicated any type of RTI implementation, questions then followed asking details about the early learning settings implementation was taking place, in what areas of curriculum it was focused, which RTI components were included, and which curriculum, progress monitoring tools, instructional decision-making models were being used. If a respondent indicated that no RTI activities were occurring, the respondent was directed to a question near the end of the survey regarding RTI challenges, skipping the intervening items. The RTI challenges question contained 9 statements reflecting challenges to RTI implementation. Each was evaluated on a 4-level Likert scale ranging from "Little/No Challenge" to "Significant Challenge." Separating these two extremes were "Some Challenge" and "Moderate Challenge" values. The final survey question (2010 only) asked respondents to indicate concerns about the implementation of RTI in early education settings and included options such as a "lack of professional development, lack of staffing, unclear policy, delay in services, lack of funding, infrastructure or state standards," as well as offering the option of open ended comments.

Surveys were accessed by respondents through an email link that delivered the survey form ready for completing. Following this first email, 619 coordinators received 4 subsequent email reminders at approximately 2 week intervals followed by individual phone contact. In the case of the Head Start survey, following the initial email, a subsequent email that requested participation and included the survey link was sent out by the Senior Advisor in the Head Collaboration Office. In all, 2009 data was received representing 44 entities (40 states and Washington, DC, 3 territories, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs). 2010 data represented 49 entities (46 states and Washington, DC, and 2 territories). A MS-EXCEL dataset containing the set respondents records including written comments was downloaded from the website and analyzed using basic descriptive statistics and graphical displays.

Results

What was the Reported Status of National Early Childhood RTI Implementation?



Results (Continued)

Percentage of Respondents Indicating that RTI is being implemented in Early Childhood Settings?

Program Type	2009 ECSE+PreK	2010 ECSE+PreK	2010 Head Start
Early Childhood Special Education	54	22	38
State Pre-K Programs	25	43	31
Head Start Programs	12	15	41
Head Start Child Care	6	5	14
Private Pre-K	3	2	3
Child Care Not Head Start	4	4	4
Blended Funds Programs	15	12	31
Charter Schools	0	1	0
University-based Preschool	3	2	7
Early Reading First	3	2	10

What are the Challenges to RTI Implementation?

Level of Challenge	*Little/None*			*Some*			*Moderate*			*Significant*		
	2009	2010	HS	2009	2010	HS	2009	2010	HS	2009	2010	HS
Insufficient trained personnel to implement RTI components.	0%	7%	7%	14%	18%	30%	25%	27%	33%	61%	44%	19%
Lack of knowledge in how to create an early childhood RTI model.	2%	7%	7%	25%	16%	33%	20%	42%	26%	53%	31%	22%
Lack of evidence-based Tier 1 programs.	0%	11%	11%	25%	40%	48%	35%	24%	19%	41%	20%	11%
Lack of administrative support and leadership.	6%	11%	15%	25%	38%	26%	31%	31%	33%	39%	16%	15%
Lack of Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention strategies.	6%	7%	7%	27%	20%	41%	31%	31%	22%	38%	38%	19%
Lack of progress monitoring measures.	10%	20%	11%	39%	27%	48%	27%	36%	26%	25%	13%	4%
Difficulty in establishing collaborative relationships between early and special education systems.	6%	18%	15%	38%	44%	41%	43%	20%	33%	14%	13%	0%
Lack of resources to develop the infrastructure to implement a RTI model.	16%	7%	11%	31%	22%	41%	27%	24%	19%	25%	42%	19%

Discussion

Results indicated that in 2010 states were reporting progress towards implementing preschool RTI in Pre-K and ECSE programs compared to 2009. The 2010 HS survey findings were similar to the Pre-K and ECSE report, however, where some ECSE and PreK states have RTI policies, HS has no specific policies. Most RTI implementation is occurring in ECSE, State Pre-K, Head Start, and Blended Funding Programs.

The greatest challenges reported were untrained staff, limited resources, lack of knowledge, and lack of Tier 2 and 3 interventions. Most states report implementing evidence-based Tier 1. The vast majority of states report not yet having RTI models that can be shared with others. Clearly, early childhood RTI is of interest by only just beginning to be considered.

References

Berkeley, S., Bender, W. N., Peaster, L. G., & Saunders, L. (2009). Implementation of response to intervention: A snapshot of progress. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 42*(1), 85-95.

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